United Nations A/60/982–S/2006/667

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
18 August 2006

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixtieth session
Agenda item 14
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Identical letters dated 18 August 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the decision taken by the Lebanese Council of Ministers on 16 August 2006 and a copy of the statement made by Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon, on that same date, both of which concern the deployment of the Lebanese army in South Lebanon (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 14, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Caroline **Ziade**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 18 August 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Decision of the Lebanese Cabinet

16 August 2006

The Lebanese cabinet has decided to deploy the Lebanese army in the two regions south of the Litani, Al-Arqoub Hasbaiya and Marjaayoun, and charged it with maintaining security in those regions and districts in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of the Defence Act. The mandate and terms of reference of the army in all of those regions shall be to defend the national territory, to maintain security and order, as well as to preserve and protect the property and livelihood of citizens and prevent the presence of forces of any kind not under the authority of the Lebanese State. In so doing, it shall ensure that the Blue Line is respected and that laws in force are applied with regard to any weapons not under the authority of the Lebanese State. The army and its leadership shall cooperate with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and coordinate with it as provided for by United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

The speech of His Excellency Mr. Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon, on the eve of the deployment of the Lebanese army in the South

The Grand Serail, Wednesday, 16 August 2006

My fellow Lebanese,

In the face of aggression you were and continue to be great. Those of you who resisted are models of heroism. Those of you who died are models of sacrifice. Those of you who stood fast are models of courage. You stood together against Israel's crime against all of Lebanon, and in your solidarity you triumphed over the ordeal. Therefore, now is not the time for division, discrimination or factional score-settling. It is the time for mutual support for the sake of the united homeland and strengthening the State.

It is the time to rise to momentous choices, for they are what hang in the balance and create a free and honourable life.

By your steadfastness in the face of the enemy and by opposing its war against Lebanon, you have confirmed that Israel no longer possesses irresistible power and an invincible army. Israel failed in its attempt to undermine your perseverance in your land your defence of it to the death. The swift return of those who were forced to leave their homes is yet another testament to their deep-rootedness in our good land and to the unremitting national resolve. This is also the resolve of all Lebanese, who should take pride in it and make it firmer. It charts our way forward, along the path of uni.y, sovereignty and freedom, so that we shall truly be one people with an independent State.

I can hardly find words to express my great pride in what has been achieved on the field of battle, in the reciprocal solidarity among the Lebanese, and in diplomatic forums. But the Israeli war machine has laid waste the length and breadth of Lebanon, killed, displaced and destroyed, and set the country back by decades.

Nevertheless, I am confident that our resolve to rise up and rebuild will match the level of our steadfastness. I also trust that all of us are well aware what is required for the security of Lebanon, the safety of all its citizens, its stability, and the right and duty of the State to extend its complete authority over all of its territory. It is no secret to you that laxity with respect to this right will put our country at risk of once again becoming a theatre of regional and international conflicts.

All this has not for one instant escaped our notice throughout the operational confrontations on the ground in Lebanon and throughout the difficult negotiations on which we have embarked to defend Lebanon and repel the threats of the protracted Israeli aggression against our people and our territory.

We have sought strength in national consensus, and have not retreated from our insistence on our firmly held national principles. We have spared no effort in persuading the international community to accord these principles their due consideration. True, Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) did not respond to all that we demanded of it. But it addresses our legitimate issues and concerns with great seriousness. It emphasizes Israeli withdrawal, international commitment to the sovereignty of Lebanon, support for it, and respect for its national decision-making. We engaged in a relentless diplomatic battle armed with our truth and our consensus and we were able to obtain essential revisions to the text of the resolution as originally proposed to the Security Council.

Whatever the justifiable objections to parts of the resolution, compared with what many expected or what the Israelis were trying for, it turned out to be a major success for Lebanese political and diplomatic efforts.

What I feel it is important to point out now is our insistence on progress towards liberating the Shab'a farms. This insistence was at the heart or our wide-ranging international, political and diplomatic activity over the course of the past year. We proceeded on two tracks to work for the liberation of the Shab'a farms: the track of working for border demarcation by direct agreement with our sister-State Syria, and the track of having recourse to the international community, given that the current problem is one of Israeli occupation rather than a territorial dispute between Lebanon and Syria. The efforts made are evident in the recent Security Council resolution. It takes seriously the demand of the Government's seven-point plan regarding Israeli withdrawal from the Shab'a farms and their temporary placement under United Nations jurisdiction. The resolution calls on the Secretary-General to deal swiftly with the issue and submit practical proposals to the Security Council. It therefore returns the subject of the Shab'a farms to the Security Council's agenda after it had been thought that resolution 425 (1978) had disposed of it. This is something unprecedented in the history of the United Nations.

All this impels us to follow up and redouble the political and diplomatic efforts with the international community and the attempts with Syria to achieve the liberation of this precious piece of our territory. I therefore continue to call on Syria